



Adding Grapes to Your Diet

by ANGELA FINLAY

The Link between Grapes and Joint Health

A recent study out of Texas Women's University concluded that grapes can have impressive anti-inflammatory effects, and their powerful benefits could even alter osteoarthritis outcomes. In short, including grapes in your regular diet can improve many of your most severe symptoms, resulting in less knee pain, more range of motion and better joint flexibility.

How Grapes Can Reduce OA Symptoms

Researchers have traced the benefits to polyphenols, specific antioxidants found in a number of whole foods, including grapes. The fruit contains a group of polyphenols called flavonoids, which have a reputation for fighting inflammation in all areas of the body; in fact, studies found that a combination of grape seeds and grape skin almost matched the effects of indomethacin, a pharmaceutical commonly reserved for degenerative joint diseases.

Traditional pain and inflammation relievers like NSAIDs and aspirin stop certain molecules from relaying the inflammatory response to your brain, and it seems that polyphenols do the same. But while grapes are loaded with flavonoids as well as a host of other anti-cancer and anti-aging polyphenols, it's unclear how many you would need to eat to get lasting, noticeable results. Instead of switching out other fruits and veggies, take a tactful approach to your diet for a good dose of the inflammation-fighting ingredients alongside all of the other important nutrients your muscles and joints need.

Reap the Most Reward with Better Choices

Since grapes are so abundant in polyphenols there's certainly room for them in your diet, but why stop there? Making a few small but clever switches can dramatically decrease your inflammation and keep your muscles and organs in good working order:

- **Olive oil over vegetable oil.** Compared to most other oils, olive oil has an exceptional amount of omega 3 fatty acids, which produce compounds called resolvins that fight inflammation. On the other hand, some other oils – like corn and sunflower – contain far more omega 6 fatty acids, which can lead to an inflammatory response.
- **Grape juice over wine.** A glass of wine a day has long been touted as a good step to heart health, but too much can inflame your stomach, intestines, and more. Of course, juice isn't without its own problems: there's an awful lot of sugar in most juices, so try watering down your glass of grape juice for a hit of polyphenols without too much fructose.
- **Green tea over coffee.** While coffee and osteoarthritis isn't bad, tea has a lots more health benefits, especially the green variety. Green tea is high in certain antioxidants called catechins, which calm inflammation and may even protect against cartilage damage. In fact, many studies have shown that the polyphenols in green tea can noticeably reduce the severity of arthritis symptoms.

The findings on polyphenols in general – and grapes in particular – is great news for the proactive arthritis patient, since this means you can take your health into your own hands. Diet is always an important player in good health and wellbeing, but when your comfort and mobility depends on your lifestyle choices, there's even more reason to seek out anti-inflammatory, polyphenol-rich foods each and every day.